

NSC BRIEFING

15 November 1956

NEAR EAST VACUUMS

- I. First vacuum will be Egypt, after contemplated withdrawal UK, French and Israeli forces.
- A. Egyptian army, still 90,000 strong, will face UN "police."
 - B. "Police" will be armed with moral authority but not battle-ready.
 - C. Nasr, puffed up with USSR's secret encouragement and public promises of aid, plus promise of Anglo-French-Israeli troop withdrawals, remains self-confident ruler of Egypt.
 - 1. As long as he holds power, he will work to frustrate any UN moves he considers hostile to his ambitions.
 - 2. Adamant stand by Nasr will be based on his belief that USSR will back him up and has more to offer him than US (viz. destruction of Israel). Nasr's stand will depend equally on his belief that US will take no effective counteraction to Soviet action in his support.
 - D. Thus, Nasr's amenability to US influence seems entirely dependent on extent of his future conviction that US is not only determined to block any Anglo-French action but also to block any Soviet intervention in area.
- II. Second vacuum already exists in Syria, where slide into Soviet camp now in process. Example present Syrian high-handedness is Sarraj threat to blow up tapline unless company agrees to furnish all Syria's fuel oil. Such Syrian orders could also cover needs of other Arabs.

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- ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
- A. Israeli move into demilitarized zones along Jordan River and Lake Hulah, on Syrian border, already provides excuse for Syrian invitation to Moscow for troop protection. Israeli re-mobilization (reported starting Monday, 12 Nov), and build-up of northern forces could provide further excuse for Syrians, particularly if Israelis attack.
 - B. Thus, Syria could be transformed into Soviet base of operations, in support of Egypt, and Soviet move to Syria might not even have to be covert.
 - C. Moreover, there would be no UN force in Syria to cover the situation.
 - D. One favorable factor, however: Turkish determination not to permit creation of a Communist Syria on its southern flank would result in resolute Turkish protests to USSR. If action in Syria were flagrant enough, it could even bring Turkish military intervention.

III. Seems likely that Soviets will attempt operations in Syria and possibly in Egypt: probably first covert and then overt in Syria; probably remaining covert (or in "volunteer" guise) in Egypt.

- A. As to "volunteers," press reports passing through Moscow censorship yesterday stated that the Egyptian Ambassador had received orders from Nasser to request the immediate sending of Soviet volunteers to Egypt.

- 1. USSR had previously announced it would "not obstruct" movement of Soviet volunteers to Egypt.

2. Greeks claim to have a copy of Soviet circular to military reservists and other personnel, instructing them to volunteer for such service.
3. Egyptian Embassy in Moscow claims at least 50,000 applications received.
6. However, we have no evidence that any Soviet volunteers have yet started on way, and same day Cairo official denied that their Moscow embassy had been asked to expedite the movement of volunteers.